

A BIG "THANK YOU" TO KEEPERS OF THE LAND VOLUNTEERS

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DES MOINES - In honor of National Volunteer Recognition Week, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers a resounding "thank you" to its dedicated volunteers.

Across the state, participants in the DNR's Keepers of the Land volunteer program donate an extraordinary amount of time and hard work to the state's natural resources.

Over the past two years, more than 123,000 volunteers served in excess of 306,000 hours helping to clean lakes and rivers, beautify parks, monitor pollution and benefit the environment in countless other ways. To put those numbers in perspective: since 2004, a volunteer force exceeding the population of Cedar Rapids has logged nearly 35 years worth of service hours.

Estimating the value of a volunteer hour at \$14.19 (according to the Independent Sector), that service is worth more than \$4.3 million dollars.

"The numbers speak for themselves," said Keepers of the Land Director Merry Rankin. "The contributions of our volunteers are invaluable and add exponentially to the success in achieving the department's mission."

In addition, DNR volunteers benefit all Iowans by enhancing and preserving the state's natural resources, both for present and future generations, Rankin said.

This year's National Volunteer Recognition Week, sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation, began Sunday, April 23 and runs until Saturday, April 29, with the theme "Inspire by Example."

Please visit www.keepersoftheland.org for information about the many Keepers of the Land volunteer programs.

Upcoming projects include the 2007 Statewide Prairie Rescue occurring through the first week of May, Operation ReLeaf community forestry events in April and May, and the fourth annual Project AWARE river cleanup, set to tackle the Iowa and English Rivers from June 17 to 24. Also look for our online events calendar.

For more information, contact Merry Rankin at (515) 281-0878 or at Merry.Rankin@dnr.iowa.gov.

Note to editors: Please contact us to find out about local volunteer projects in your area.